

The Commissariat Store is located at the birthplace of Queensland - on William Street, facing the river.

In 1824 the Moreton Bay Penal Settlement was established as a place of secondary punishment for New South Wales convicts. The beginnings of Brisbane Town were established on the north bank of the Brisbane River in 1825 in the area which later became William and George streets. Four buildings were used at first for the handling of stores - food, clothing and other goods – for the use of the military and convicts. In April 1828 Acting Civil Engineer William Dumaresque's plan for a permanent Commissariat Store was sent to Moreton Bay.

Work on the construction of the Commissariat Store started in July 1828 with excavation of the river bank and laying of foundations. The convicts took four months on it. A brick drain system was created to drain the site and the Commissariat Store was erected at the back of the site facing the Brisbane River. Masonry and other construction was undertaken by more skilled convicts supervised by Lt Bainbrigge. He had been sent especially from Sydney specifically for this task and it is believed the work was completed in 1829.

The finished building was a simple, two-storey utilitarian structure with a shingle hip roof and generally described as a Georgian Breakfront design. A central projecting gable on the river elevation enhances the building. The importance of this government building and its river frontage was emphasised by the addition the royal cipher of King George IV under the gable. Windows were small, unglazed and bared for security. Inside, the building measured 76 by 30 feet. The ground floor was open space for storage and the upper floor was partitioned at either end. Doors on both levels were under the gable and were used to admit goods.

The walls were constructed of porphyry blocks laid in regular courses on the front elevation and less regular on other elevations. The porphyry came from nearby Kangaroo Point. Sandstone was used for footings, base course, quoins, sills and lintels. The ground floor had porphyry blocks laid on the ground with a series of drains beneath this. While the main support beams were grey iron bark, yellow wood was used for the first floor flooring.

Part of the Commissariat included a wharf on the river bank in front of the Store. In 1838 it was known as Kings Wharf (later Queens Wharf) and was around 38 feet wide.

Although the Moreton Bay Penal Settlement closed in 1839 and Brisbane Town was opened to free settlers in 1842, the Commissariat Store continued to be used as a government store and the wharf for government purposes. During the 1850s the first floor was used, intermittently, to house an overflow of immigrants. The ground floor was restricted to storage.

Following the creation of the Colony of Queensland, the building was renamed the Colonial Store in 1860. The first floor was converted to police quarters. Eighteen new hardwood sash windows were installed and other windows were enlarged and glazed. Some of these windows still contain old float glass with ripples and elongated bubbles. In the 1860s and 1870s the first floor was again used from time to time to accommodate immigrants.

The building was renamed the Government Stores in 1898. In 1907 the Storekeeper believed the location was no longer convenient and requested relocation to nearer the steamer wharf and railway station. His request was ignored and in June 1911 he suggested the construction of a third floor that would provide access to William Street and increase floor space. English born and trained, Public Works architect Leonard Kempster designed the additional storey. English trained stonemason William Kitchen won the tender. The new section was constructed of rendered brick in a Georgian Revival style sympathetic to the lower storeys. A centrally placed ventilation fleche and two dormer windows, facing William Street, allowed the attic space to be used. To support the new floor 16 timber pillars were added to the first floor and eight on the ground floor. The original roof timbers were reused but the roofing iron was new. The work was completed in 1913.

A centralised agency for government purchasing and supply came under consideration in the 1910s. In 1923 the State Stores Board was established to purchase and distribute goods required by all government departments except the Railways Department. The inaugural meeting of the Board took place at the Government Stores building on Thursday 29 March 1923 at 11:00 am. The Commissariat Store was again renamed and became the State Stores Building. The building was used by State Stores for administration and stock holding up until 1951 when the administration and purchasing sections moved to Margaret Street. The building then was used to house stationery. As government departments grew storage needs did also and necessitated the acquisition of other buildings. On 12 September 1960 State Stores vacated the building.

The Store provided space for other overcrowded government departments, with Queensland State Archives occupying the ground floor until 1968 to be replaced by the State Library and the Law Reform Commission who remained until 1976 when the building became vacant.

In 1959 Queensland celebrated its 100th birthday. Queensland Government Architect EJA Weller prepared a listing of government buildings of heritage value deserving protection; the Commissariat Store was one of the buildings recognised as being of heritage significance. In 1969 the Queensland Government decided to allocate \$40,000 per annum for restoration of scheduled heritage buildings and Public Works engaged two stonemasons for the work and a mason's workshop was established in the Store's yard. Following the establishment of Commonwealth Government National Estate Grants Program more stone masons were employed by the government to work on a number of government owned stone buildings.

In 1977 the decision was made for the Royal Historical Society of Queensland to occupy the building. Extensive renovations occurred during 1978-79. Part of this work included redeveloping and landscaping a small parcel of land which adjoins the Store. It had long been a grassy slope that allowed access to the store's middle floor. It was named Miller Park in memory of Captain Miller, the first Moreton Bay Commandant.

By June 1981 renovation was finished and the building became the headquarters of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland. The stonemasons vacated the yard in 1997. The Department of Public Works commissioned a conservation plan which was completed in 1998 and, with a Centenary of Federation Cultural and Heritage Projects Program grant of \$1.1 million and state government funding of \$865,000, the building underwent major restoration work which was completed by 2001.

Since occupation by the Royal Historical Society of Queensland, the Commissariat Store has been used as a museum, research centre, as a venue for RHSQ activities such as conferences and meetings. The Store is also available for hiring for small functions such as book launches, exhibitions, chamber music concerts and corporate events.